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# *The Gem State Guardian*

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## **Idaho Guardsman /Motocross champion promotes tobacco-free lifestyle**

By Maj. Christopher Borders

Not only is Chief Warrant Officer Ed Barnowski a maintenance readiness officer in the Idaho National Guard, he's also a skilled motocross champion who has been riding and racing motorcycles in Idaho since 1976.

Project Filter is Idaho's Tobacco Prevention Program managed by the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. The project was established through the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement; a tobacco settlement paid across the 50 states in part to educate the public on the negative health implications caused by tobacco use.

Add one Ed Barnowski to one Project Filter and you have a winning recipe for delivering an extremely powerful and important message to the public: STEER CLEAR of TOBACCO!

The 47-year-old Guardsman had been looking for a community outreach opportunity to channel his talents. "One day I was in my garage talking with a neighbor when he noticed a few of my motocross trophies." That neighbor happened to be involved with Project Filter, who at the time was sponsoring racecar drivers and rodeo riders to represent the program. "The next thing I knew I was putting together a race schedule as a sponsored rider that would include traveling statewide representing Project Filter on the frontlines in the fight for a tobacco-free Idaho," Barnowski said.

Project Filter now sponsors rodeo riders, racecar drivers and softball teams in addition to motocross racers. "We target events and venues where people would most likely use tobacco, using athletes as role models to deliver the message that tobacco and athletics don't go together; that a healthy lifestyle and tobacco aren't compatible," he said.

They also target elementary, junior high and high school students in the hopes of preemptively intervening. "I feel schools are our real money maker," Barnowski said. "You combine the cool trailer, riding gear along with the bike and a 30-minute presentation on the negative effects of tobacco use and it really gets the kids' attention."

In addition to schools, they travel to fairs, youth summer camps, and even Idaho



In this photo released by Project Filter, Idaho Guard member Ed Barnowski, second from right, stands with other members of the Project Filter Motocross Team. The team's mission is to promote healthier lifestyles among Idaho's public by stressing the importance of steering clear of tobacco. Photo courtesy of Project Filter

Guard events; from Preston to Coeur D'Alene to Boise.

And it's not just about the youth. "I'll never forget, we were on the starting line at a local race and just as the gate was about to drop, the rider next to me said, 'Hey! I need to get with you about Project Filter! I really need to quit!' 'Okay!' I said, then the race was on. I want my competition to be healthy so they can enjoy the sport to the fullest, and as much as I do," Barnowski added.

Their measure of effectiveness comes through monitoring website hits at [www.quitnow.net/idaho](http://www.quitnow.net/idaho). "Every time we compete in an event, we always see a spike in site activity. It feels good to know we're making a difference."

Personally, Ed is an advocate for not only a tobacco-free lifestyle but a healthier lifestyle. His presentations also include information on cigars, hookah, vaping and marijuana. "They're all drugs. A lot of people don't see it that way but they're all addictive and cause serious health-related problems," he says.

For more information on Project Filter, or if you would like to inquire about having a skilled team of athletes display some real

horsepower while conveying this important message, visit the website at [www.projectfilter.com](http://www.projectfilter.com) or check them out on Facebook. Project Filter offers free resources for Idahoans to help them quit using tobacco. Call the Idaho Quitline at 1-800-Quitnow.



Ed Barnowski, a motocross racer with Project Filter and member of the Idaho Army National Guard, provides a presentation to students of Maple Grove Elementary in May of 2014 on the health risks of tobacco use. Project Filter is a program designed to inform Idaho's public on the benefits of a tobacco-free lifestyle. Photo courtesy of Project Filter

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